

MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE

1753. Mr P.D. Omodei to the Minister for Community Development

- (1) Does the Minister and the Government support mandatory reporting of child abuse?
- (2) If not, why not?
- (3) Will this position be reconsidered or changed in the near future?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1)-(2) The Government is open to all ideas which will contribute to the protection of children.

There is targeted mandated reporting in Western Australia. Under the Western Australian Family Court Act 1997, court personnel, counsellors and mediators must report child abuse and may also report suspicions of child abuse in Family Court cases to the Department for Community Development. The child care regulations of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 requires early childhood, family day care and outside school hours care providers to report abuse in a child care service to the Department for Community Development. The Health Act 1911 requires that medical practitioners, nurse practitioners, and pathology laboratories report sexually transmitted infections, including those in children, to the Department of Health.

Furthermore, through policy based-protocols between the Department of Health, the Department for Community Development and the WA Police, all children under 14 years of age with a STI, and children between the ages of 14-16 with an STI acquired through abuse, must be reported. Reciprocal Child Protection Procedures are in place between Department for Community Development and key Government agencies and the Joondalup Health Campus to support workers in these agencies to make reports. High risk and high need cases must be reported and there is no evidence that people do not report them. For those other cases where there are concerns for the wellbeing of children we must ensure that those people, professionals and agencies who are engaged with the family and are a source of support and protection to the child are acknowledged and supported in the work they do. There is no evidence that broad based legislative approaches in other States have better protected children.

- (3) The Government is continually considering the outcomes of research and the evidence from other States and jurisdictions.